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SOVIET AFFAIRS ANALYSIS SERVICE

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Outline of Reference Paper •On:

SOVIET ARMY MORALE AND DISCIPLINE

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An Assessment As of Soviet Army Day, February 23, 1960

The observance this week of Soviet Army Day in the USSR found Soviet armed forces personnel caught in the impact of a drastic change in the Soviet Union's military posture — the recent decision to demobilize 1,200,000 officers and men. The discharged servicemen are to be moved into vital, but unattractive areas of Soviet industry, as the Soviet leadership attempts to meet the ambitious goals of the Seven-Year Plan. The resulting blow to military morale apparently is worrying the Soviet authorities. During the past two months the Soviet press, especially the army and navy papers, has been full of exhortations to the troops affected by the forthcoming demobilization and also of discussions of weaknesses within the Soviet armed forces. Particular attention is being given to political shortcomings. Apathy and political ignorance are to be combatted by tightening Party control in all formations and units. The effects of the brief period when the military appeared to be displaying signs of independence of Party supervision, during Marshal Zhukov's ascendancy as Minister of Defense, have vanished without a trace.

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ARMY MORALE AND DISCIPLINE

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An Assessment As of Soviet Army Day, February 23, 1960

According to Soviet military doctrine, members of the Soviet armed forces must carry out orders not only precisely, bravely and unquestioningly, but also with enthusiasm, in a spirit of boundless confidence in the Party and in the name of the great ideas of Communism. They must be not merely good soldiers but also enthusiastic builders of Communism.

Certain indications of the state of mind now prevalent among members of the Soviet armed forces, as well as certain events which have occurred recently within the Soviet armed forces or in close connection with them indicate that the second of these two requirements remains unfulfilled. The morale of the armed forces, a term which must be understood as covering not only "morale" in the normal Western sense but also political attitudes and the degree of political indoctrination, cannot but cause the Soviet leadership some misgivings.

Throughout the USSR and also among the Army groups of Soviet troops stationed in the satellite countries, Party conferences and officers' conferences are now being held. The importance attached to these conferences may be gauged from the fact that they are being attended everywhere by senior Party functionaries and military commanders. A recent officers' meeting in Moscow, for example, was attended by Marshal Rodion Malinovsky, the USSR's Minister of Defense, and Mikhail Suslov, a member of the Presidium of the All-Union Party Central Committee. Marshal Malinovsky also spoke at a Party conference in Eastern Germany. Similarly, Central Committee Presidium member Averkiy Aristov spoke at a meeting of officers of the Southern Army Group stationed in Hungary, and Central Committee Presidium member Nikolai Ignatov at a meeting in the Northern Army Group stationed in Poland.

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As official Soviet phraseology puts it, these Party conferences were devoted to the "necessity of improving Party-political, intra-Party and ideological work in the light of the decisions of the Twenty-First Party Congress, the October (1957) Central Committee Plenum and the Fourth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR." The officers' conferences were exclusively devoted to studying the recent decisions on the forthcoming large-scale demobilization.

Massive Demobilization Jolts Soviet Army Morale

It must be borne in mind that even in the USSR, where there is allegedly no unemployment, it is no easy task to rehabilitate and resettle in a new life 1,200,000 demobilized men, especially 250,000 regular officers. The psychological blow sustained by members of the Soviet armed forces as a result of the decision to curtail the number of troops under arms is made all the heavier by the Soviet leadership's plans to use the demobilized men to fill the hard-labor areas of Soviet industry, in accordance with the requirements of the Seven-Year Plan. A leading article in the Soviet Army newspaper, Krasnaya Zvezda, (Red Star), for January 27, 1960, declared:

A high consciousness of their duty to their homeland summons the (demobilized) soldiers to those places where conditions are hardest, where young forces are especially needed.... Military councils, political organs, commanders and political workers must undertake explanatory work among those who are being transferred to the reserve.

Clearly, the prospects facing these men--- the enlisted men, who must abandon their dream of returning to their homes, and even more so, the officers, who have no specialty other than military service--- will scarcely raise the Soviet Army's morale and the contingents of the "Builders of Communism" will inevitably be filled with hundreds of thousands of malcontents.

The curtailment of the armed forces will be used as a pretext to purge the ranks of regular officers and enlisted men who for one reason or another have failed to satisfy the Party and military authorities. According to Krasnaya Zvezda of January 7, 1960, this purge will also cover the officer cadet schools, from which unsatisfactory cadets will be removed.

Concern for the Soviet Army's morale and desire to intensify Party work in its ranks already prompted some previous measures. One of the most important of these was the resolution by the Party Central Committee in October 1957, "On the Improvement of Party-Political Work in the Soviet Army and Fleet." This resolution led to the complete eclipse of the then Minister of Defense, Marshal Zhukov, who was accused of

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... conducting a policy calculated to curtail the work of Party organizations, political organs and military councils, to destroy the leadership and control over the Army and Fleet exerted by the Party, its Central Committee and the Government (Krasnaya Zvezda, November 3, 1957).

According to this resolution the state of the Soviet armed forces was a matter for which, "along with the commanders," military councils, political organs and Party organizations were also answerable, since their direct responsibilities included the "improvement of Party-political and intra-Party work." (Here a distinction should be noted between "political organs" in the Soviet armed forces, which are Party organs controlled by the Central Political Authority of the All-Union Ministry of Defense and attached at various levels to: Army and Navy formations and whose personnel are not elected but appointed, and "Party organizations," which in organization and status resemble Party organizations in Soviet civil institutions.) After the resolution had been published, the principal speeches at routine Party conferences of military districts and divisions of the fleet began to be delivered by the heads of the political organs at this level, whereas in 1956 they had been given by the district commanders. Political organs also intensified their efforts to improve Party-political work.

Failure of October 1957 Party Resolution

More than two years have passed since then, and today these political organs are compelled to admit that the requirements of the October 1957 Central Committee resolution have not been carried out. Consequently, ideological work designed to improve the morale and political attitudes of the amarmed forces still leaves much to be desired. In an attempt to justify this state of affairs, Lt-General Pyotr Yefimov, First Deputy Chief of the Army and Navy Central Political Authority, declared that what had been done during the two years following the October 1957 resolution was

... only the beginning of our work. Under no circumstances must it be forgotten that the Plenum's decision is a big program of work for the Communists of the armed forces, covering a lengthy period of time (Partiinaya Zhizn, (Party Life), 1959, No. 21).

When Colonel-General Vasyagin, chief of the political organ attached to the Soviet Army Group stationed in East Germany, emphasized, at a Party conference held by this Army Group, the necessity of "executing to the last detail the resolution of the October (1957) Plenum of the Party Central Committee," he was merely confirming the failure to put this decision into effect up to that time.

Soviet Army Weaknesses Summarized

Among the faults which came to light and were discussed during recent Party conferences held in the various military districts, the following should be noted:

1. The low state of Party-political work:

In Party-political work there are still many serious shortcomings, which prevent the successful fulfillment of the tasks confronting units and sections (Krasnaya Zvezda, February 2, 1960. Report on Party conference of the Transcaucasian Military District).

It appears that the faults in ideological work pointed out in the Central Committee resolution published on January 10, 1960 ("On the Tasks of Party Propaganda.") are also to be observed in propaganda work in the armed forces:

Many who spoke in the debate on questions of ideological work failed to give a deep analysis of the work of political organs and Party organizations in the light of the Party Central Committee's resolution "On the Tasks of Party Propaganda," even though some time has already passed since this document was published. After all, the serious faults pointed out in the resolution apply entirely to the district Party organizations. (Ibid., February 2, 1960).

One of these "shortcomings," applying also to the Soviet army, is the absence of a spirit of "proletarian internationalism." Among the troops of the Southern Army Group, for example, antagonism toward the local population has been observed. At the Party conference held in this Army Group attention was drawn to

...the necessity of strengthening the education of soldiers in the spirit of proletarian internationalism, of strengthening friendship with the workers of the Hungarian People's Republic and the soldiers of the Hungarian People's Army (Krasnaya Zvezda, February 5, 1960).

2. Lack of "conscious," i.e., self-imposed discipline, and "amoral" manifestations among members of the armed forces. Commanders, political workers and Party organizations have evidently failed to carry out the demands of the October, 1957 Central Committee Plenum "concerning the strengthening of conscious military discipline as the basis of an army's readiness for battle" (Ibid., January 29, 1960, Report on Party conference of the Moscow Military District). Elsewhere it has been noted that:

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In certain units and subunits, there are still many deviations from the requirements of regulations. Certain political organs and Party organizations study only superficially the reasons for violations of discipline, and do not always judge cases of amoral acts as though they were matters of principle. The speaker and other delegates have quoted cases of gross violation of disciplinary practice.... The political section (of a certain unit)... does not remove the causes of misdemeanors and amoral phenomena (*Krasnaya Zvezda*, February 3, 1960, Report on Party conference of the Belorussian military district.)

According to *Krasnaya Zvezda* of January 29, 1960, political organs and party organizations are not "waging an implacable struggle against amoral phenomena."

Attention is also being drawn to the practice current among young people of assuming collective responsibility for the misdemeanors of one of their number and refusing to collaborate with the authorities in the detection and punishment of such misdemeanors. This practice, known as "Krugovaya Poruka" --- i.e., "collective responsibility" or "mutual guarantee," was condemned in a resolution adopted by the Seventh Plenary Session of the Komsomol:

Among young people, especially in schools and places of higher education, cases are still occurring of "Krugovaya Poruka," connivance with those who violate social discipline (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, February 5, 1960).

This practice, which amounts to a refusal to condemn the misdoings of friends or colleagues, has, together with other similar phenomena, spread to the Soviet army, where it is seriously hindering the efforts of political organs to educate the men in a spirit of conscious discipline and the principles of Communist ethics.

3. The failure of Communists and Komsomol members to set an example of ordinary good conduct or of diligence in military and political studies. At the Party conference held in the Belorussian military district, it was stated that in one of the district's army units, only 2 out of 17 Party members and 4 out of 42 Komsomol members had distinguished themselves in their studies.

4. The suppression of Party criticism by military commanders:

Cases occur in which certain young officers turn out to be incapable of making sense of the situation that has arisen; they wrongly understand their own prospects and lose interest in military service. It is extremely important to come to their aid in time, to cure them of mistaken views, to warn them of false steps (*Ibid*, February 7, 1960).

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Party Control Over Soviet Army Due to Tighten

From the proceedings of the recent Party conference, it is possible to foresee some of the measures contemplated by the Party Central Committee in order to deal with the present situation. Evidently it is intended to transfer the main burden of coping with the faults mentioned above from the army political organs to the Party organizations. This is confirmed by the fact that, obviously on instructions "from above," the reports of the Party conferences repeatedly stress the "superficiality" of the "analyses" given in the speeches read by a number of heads of political organs attached to military districts, and sharply criticize the work of these organs.

Evidently, persuaded that in two years or more the political organs have not succeeded in coping with Party-political work, the Soviet leaders are now trying to place their reliance upon the Party organizations, which they proclaim to be the future "collective leaders" of the political and military life of army units. It is not by chance that in enumerating the high officials who were present, the reports of the Party conferences of military districts, despite the unwritten laws which govern military protocol, this time gave the names of Party instructors and heads of sections attached to the All-Union Party Central Committee ahead of those of district military commanders, the chief of the Central Political Authority and his deputies.

Further measures now underway include the enhancing of the Komsomol's role through sending experienced Communists to work in Komsomol organs at various levels, even the lowest; a certain relaxation of the distinction separating commissioned from non-commissioned ranks in the army through artificially stressing the "friendship" between them (Krasnaya Zvezda, February 7, 1960), and, finally (perhaps the most important feature from the military point of view), a campaign to encourage the development of initiative in officers of junior rank.

All these measures for improving the morale and political attitude of Soviet servicemen are, however, unlikely to improve radically the existing situation, since the problem of morale and political attitudes is an obstacle impeding the development of a Communist society in every area of Soviet life, of which the Soviet army, in turn, is only a part. The morale and political orientation of the Soviet army, to which such importance is attached by Soviet military doctrine, must therefore be a source of serious misgivings for the Soviet leaders.